

# STRIKE BACK!

IWW Scotland  
Newsletter  
[iwwscotland.wordpress.com](http://iwwscotland.wordpress.com)

Post Brexit European  
Left - The IWW  
discuss and debate

Page  
2

Report on ICHLC  
Conference Ireland

Page  
3

IWOC Strike &  
Agency Work/  
Immigrant Labour  
Report

Page  
4

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## New forms of exploitation New forms of resistance!

The 'gig economy', where workers are nominally self-employed or 'independent contractors' in the delivery of services, has recently become newsworthy as the mainstream media has picked up on the organising efforts of new, militant workers' unions such as at Deliveroo, the delivery service or recent landmark legal decisions, as with Uber, the 'taxi' service.

In London, the Independent Workers Union (IWGB) has been at the forefront of trying to give an organised voice to Deliveroo workers who deliver on behalf of mostly small fast food business but whose contracts with Deliveroo (their employer in all but name) mean they regularly work for considerably less than the minimum wage over the course of a shift. Last summer Deliveroo riders in London responded to their employer's decision to get rid of the £7.00 per delivery guarantee with anger and action. There were week long strikes in 4 areas of London and after a Deliveroo IWGB union member was victimised for their union activity, union pressure got them reinstated. In London the IWGB are pushing for union

recognition, but whether they get this or not, effective union organisation is not going to go away.



**PROPER FOOD, PROPER DELIVERY,  
PROPER WAGE SLAVERY**

Outside of London, the IWW is organising Deliveroo workers in various parts of the UK. In Bristol, IWW members at Deliveroo organised a strike against unmanageable training targets. A member explains:

**“Us trainers in Bristol had real problems with our jobs. We could get assigned 20 trial shifts a day, 2, 4 or 6 at a time. It was really dangerous, and it just didn't work. You can't test someone's ability to do the**

**job when there are five cyclists behind you! They promised us an hourly rate for each trial, but it only lasted one hour. If the trial took longer, we weren't getting paid”.**

Following the wildcat work stoppage the company brought in significant changes to the trial system which workers could work with.

The successes of Deliveroo workers in London and Bristol point to the fact that, despite difficult conditions for organising and the dubious 'self-employed' status of many workers – where there is an commitment to collective action it works and militant, direct action based unions can make a difference to the working lives of those who were perhaps thought of as unorganisable. Where workers meet new forms of exploitation there will be new forms of resistance!

Deliveroo and others working in the 'gig economy' are welcome in the IWW, where they will receive solidarity, support and training.

### Contact your nearest branch:

West Scotland - [clydeside@iww.org.uk](mailto:clydeside@iww.org.uk)  
South East - [edinburgh@iww.org.uk](mailto:edinburgh@iww.org.uk)  
North East - [aberdeen@iww.org.uk](mailto:aberdeen@iww.org.uk)

## Upcoming Event: May Day on the Green 2017

On Monday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, at 2 pm-- in the east part of the Glasgow Green next to the cycling centre, across from the Templeton Factory-- all are invited to a family-and-friends celebration of May Day on the Glasgow Green, where parties like this have been held for generations.

to chat with, people to meet, and stories and news of our radical past and present.

May Day belongs to the people of Glasgow, and May Day belongs on the Green. See you there!

For more information and updates write to [annarky@radicalglasgow.me.uk](mailto:annarky@radicalglasgow.me.uk).

Co-sponsored by Spirit of Revolt/Archive of Dissent and the Clydeside Branch of the IWW

publicized shopping of migrant workers to the UKBA and individual wobs supported Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty in its long fight for the right to be accompanied into jobcentre appointments.

We are currently in talks with Oficiana Precaria (a grassroots autonomous self organised group which is doing advocacy work mainly helping migrants) about collaborating on some of the workplace campaigns they are working on.



Last year's May Day on the Green was a big success, and this year's will be too. Once again, there will be music, poetry, banners, face painting, singing, food to share, friends

## Edinburgh IWW Update

Edinburgh IWW has been showing solidarity on the picketline with the ScotRail workers who have recently been on strike over the issue of Driver Only Operated (D.O.O.) trains and we have managed to build up a decent rapport. We also picketed Topshop in solidarity with workers affiliated to the United Voices of the World union in London. Some Wobs were involved in pickets of Byron Burgers over its well



IWW Scotland Members picketing Byron Burgers in 2016

## Post Brexit European Left

Article by Susan D

**Wobbly discussion and debate: A union member considers..Quandaries and Possibilities, Problems and Solutions: the Scottish and European Left, Post Brexit**

### Nationalism

Since the Brexit vote, the Scottish Left seems to be even more entangled with the SNP than during and after the Scottish Independence referendum. A movement for Scottish independence needs to be decoupled from nationalism and the contradictory goal of becoming a member of the supranational EU. Independence for Scotland only makes sense if it stands for a socialist republic, aiming toward a regional, then global, federation of socialist republics. We need to communicate and work with other Leftists in EU countries who also want to extricate themselves from an institution that exists solely to advance the interests of global capitalism.

### Internationalism

To be internationalists is to work for solidarity within the working class against the politics, social control, and international structures of international capitalism. This involves staying informed about current acts of resistance and militancy (e.g, French strikes and Greek anti-EU demonstrations), personal contact between revolutionary socialists around the world, comradely debate, and coordinated actions and projects. Contrary to the Left Remain campaign, the EU neither represents nor furthers this international perspective.

### Immigration

The radical left needs to engage in serious study and discussion of this issue as a basis for action in keeping with our socialist principles. Although slogans like Open Borders and No Person is Illegal do help affirm our vision of a new society of freedom, justice, and equality, they are no longer adequate to the range of opinion and emotion the issue generates these days. This discussion would involve an analysis of historical and current factors, effects of immigration on both the home country and the receiving country, an appreciation of the trauma of relocation, and the loss and dependence experienced by those back home.

### Political parties

“Know your enemy” could be the best reason for bothering to keep track of party politics. Like other parts of the capitalist infrastructure, political parties, even the more left-wing ones, are at the service of the ruling class, despite whatever rhetoric they come up with. Right now, government

“policy makers” have the task of helping shore up capitalism by giving us of the working class-- who have suffered the most from the persistence of the global economic meltdown caused in 2008 by the housing and banking industries-- the responsibility for ending this crisis through “belt-tightening” and self-help endeavors. We need to see through and confront these “blame the victim” tactics of the rich and powerful. We need to create alternative groups and organisations that will work together to build a mass movement that challenges, counters, and replaces both the ends and the means of those who currently hold power.

### Trade unions

Most mainstream unions are moribund, their tactics half-hearted, and their officials in league with management and the government. On the bright and feisty side are the Industrial Workers of the World with branches in Glasgow and Edinburgh and members throughout Scotland, the Junior Doctors of NHS England, rank and file organising such as the Sparks in the construction industry, the French unions now coordinating strike actions against anti-worker legislation including watering down the hard-won 35 hour work week, the RMT actions protesting the foolhardy plan of ScotRail to have trains without guards, and signs of life within the education workers unions to fight for overdue pay rises and pension rights, and against work overloads and the emphasis on tests and testing.

### Austerity

This is the crux of the Brexit vote. For most of us, daily life has worsened due to budget cuts, no job or precarious employment, increased “policing” of our personal affairs, and deliberate and unceasing efforts by corporations and government to divert our attention from the causes and effects of our situation to jingoistic extravaganzas (always with a “royal” on hand), consumer “innovations”, and guilt for our lack of “motivation”. We see the results: fear, frustration, anxiety, anger, racism, and immigrant-bashing.

During the first rounds of budget cuts, fight-back groups like UK Uncut took to the streets, and the public sector workers put together an energetic one-day strike supported by massive demonstrations throughout the UK. This was followed by workfare protests, and more recently the formation of Action Against Austerity and other campaigns against the cruel treatment of people with disabilities.

We need to stay on course with these projects and actions, but they should be explicitly anti-capitalist. This will broaden our base and acknowledge how interconnected our issues are. Above all, we need to stay hopeful, and to keep focused on the fact that another world is possible.

### War and peace

We shouldn't let the Chicot Report fade away, especially with UK troops being sent off right now for the Russia border with Poland as part of a NATO action to bolster the military and political agenda of the US in Eastern Europe. The report reveals the cynicism of politicians toward the desire of the people for an end to wars. Radicals need be a strong voice in the anti-war and peace and justice movements, as the IWW reps to the Scottish Peace Network have done in pointing out that Scrap Trident is meaningless unless combined without an equally vigorous No to NATO campaign. reform and revolution

We need to get off the fence, defend our revolutionary perspective, and join forces with the European workers and agitators who are fighting back. In spite of the complexities and contradictions of the Brexit campaign and vote, the outcome has shown that pulling out of the EU is a viable option for those who know that the EU can not be reformed. Together the revolutionary European Left can put forward an immediate program of actions and projects that expose the vulnerabilities of global capitalism, rather than a package of counterproductive reforms, as a step toward our ultimate goal of its eradication.

### Privatisation and deregulation

These features of the free market have been on the UK and EU agenda for decades, and they have worked quite well toward the goals of dismantling the public sector and “streamlining” the private sector in order to keep corporations and nations “competitive” and to protect profit margins. This game plan has led to layoffs and to dysfunctional health, education, and transport services, and replaced workers' rights with dog-eat-dog competition for the decreasing number of good jobs with benefits. This in the guise of improving the quality of services and making work more accomodating through flex-time and working from home. Instead, we live in an age of pervasive, continuous, precariousness. We need to face these facts, and engage in collective resistance and mass actions that challenge and take power from the status quo-- and envision something a lot better.

### Devolution and decentralisation

These are examples of concepts and articles of faith that can trip-up the left. They rightly speak to people's desire for autonomy and local governance. But at the same time, they can mask the ways they can derail us from our revolutionary principles and programmes. While they appear to be elements of empowerment, they can just as easily be used as a sales pitch by politicians for their own ends, as when the mayor of London (the city that provides the UK with one-third of its tax revenue and isn't keen on sharing it with poorer parts of the country)

**Article Continues on Page 3...**

**Continuing from Page 2...**

spoke in favour of devolution for London and all UK towns as an opportunity to "take back our cities and neighbourhoods". Start reindustrialising, folks! (A tall order since corporations sought and found sources of "affordable" labour elsewhere, thus crushing our industries.) Decentralisation is another two-edged sword, with Town and City Councils in poor regions battling to make ends meet with meagre local revenue.

As examples of the quandaries we face post Brexit, devolution and decentralisation, under capitalism, are definitely not prescriptions for wresting control from the corporate and political elites. They represent the raft of structures and systems that are meant to keep us in our place. They don't have to.

## IWW Opposes Bedroom Tax 2 & the inclusion of ASBO Clauses in Tenancy agreements affecting tenants in Scotland in the private & social rented sectors.



In the context of other concerning recent policy manoeuvres from the Scottish Government like the formalising of private status of Housing Associations and with Bedroom Tax 2 looming the IWW oppose the new, 'Model Tenancy Agreement,' proposed by the Scottish Government on various grounds. The Scottish Tenants Organisation recently reported that section 29 of the agreement effectively extends Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to the private rented sector. We see the contractual as consensual relation (between tenant/factor/ landlord) proposed by 'Model Tenancy Agreement,' as ignoring (in fact hiding) the uneven power relations between these parties putting tenants in increasingly precarious situations.

For more information visit: the **Scottish Tenants Organisation** website: [www.scottishtenants.org](http://www.scottishtenants.org)

## Report on ICHLC Conference Ireland and the Wobbly World

Article by MB

**Irish Labour Radicals and the IWW in the early 20th Century at NUI Galway 11-12 November 2016.**

The Conference, hosted by the Irish Centre for Histories of Labour and Class, yielded some fascinating material and most/all talks will be uploaded as recordings and might be published as well. I would recommend a listen.

Proceedings opened with Labour Historian Francie Devine singing 'Joe Hill', and in the course of his talk he wondered, following as inquiry from a Fellow Worker from Liverpool, how many Irish Wobs there might still be about. It was good to be able to clarify that there was organising going on, and it gave me a chance to plug the meeting and stall.

Overall, what came through strongly in the papers and discussions was the ingenuity and endurance of Wobs in general, with the Irish ones as the focus. I came across many figures I'd never heard of and have much follow up reading to do. It was striking how much people sacrificed in the past and we should gain strength from this: it certainly made me think about what I consider to be 'risk', compared with what many endured.

There was discussion about how the IWW influenced Connolly and Larkin's thinking, and an attempt at unpicking the tides which have flowed back and forth throughout history and across the globe. So while, of necessity, the conference focused on Irish migrants, the impact of other mainly similarly oppressed groups on them was evident throughout - underscoring the relevance of the world wide aspiration put forward by the IWW.

I was particularly taken with Kristin Lawlor's analysis of Gurley Flynn's formulation of sabotage as "conscious withdrawal of efficiency" and there was a good discussion of the role of mobile phones internet etc as a means of oppression today, and as a site of disruption. Interesting stuff too on South Africa. I also learned of Patrick Read who has an astounding history of activism. Two points among many on him; his major role in the Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War - written out of history, and that he was the first to write a critique of the Music of Wobbly songwriter Joe Hill. Which leads me to my next point...

There were papers given at an event in a Galway pub on Friday night and singing afterwards. The music of Joe Hill, songs of the Spanish Civil War, and James Connolly, among others were given an airing. Someone

called for a Leonard Cohen song, as his death had been announced that day, and I did The Partisan, not sure what the French at the end was like. But the point was, a few people who came over to talk at the stall the next day mentioned the singing and we got into useful discussion on the back of it. This brought home to me the centrality of music in our union, and the wisdom of the early Wobs in putting it at the heart of our activity.

FW Steve Thornton who runs the Shoelather History Project is doing a piece on the conference for our international magazine, Industrial Worker, and said he will have something on our organising meeting in the article, along with a photo of our IWW Ireland banner, which I have to say was a major hit!

The organisers were happy to promote the IWW presence and very welcoming. The stall was visited by probably all conference attendees and a number of students throughout the two days. Leaflets and banner were left up throughout, and I distributed merchandise in the breaks. I'd have liked to have had a chance to talk to cleaners and other workers in NUI, but I didn't get round to it, though perhaps they got leaflets.

The public meeting had maybe ten attending, and a Fellow Worker came up from Cork to provide moral support, which was most appreciated. I spoke about why I joined the IWW at the tender age of 53, traced a disillusionment with business unions, and a history comprising growing up in a community in the North of Ireland, with an antipathy to the State (which I'm convinced was mutual), seeing the subtler oppressions while living in Dublin, and my own developing analysis which convinces me of both the bankruptcy of 'representation' and the need for an organised working class.

The first line of the preamble is what 'sold' the IWW to me, and I explored that as a theme, along with the model of industrial democracy. There were questions on this, and on recent successes like Deliveroo. I'm not sure if we gained any members in Galway but it generated the message that the IWW is organising in Ireland and some useful contacts were made. Overall, I'm pleased to get my first public meeting over and done with, to have learned more Wobbly history, and to see a bit more clearly how similar the struggle of 100 years ago is to that of today.



**ONE BIG UNION - JOIN THE IWW**

## IWOC Strike

On the 10th of December 2016 Clydeside IWW held a picket outside two Starbucks and one McDonald's in the city centre of Glasgow. This action was in solidarity with the strike organised by the Incarcerated Worker's Organising Committee in US prisons. While primarily done to support the efforts of prisoners in the United States, we view the injustice of prison and prison labour to be an important battle to be had in the UK as well.



IWW Picketing Starbucks in Glasgow in 2016

In the USA, the overwhelming majority of prisoners come from disadvantaged ethnic minority backgrounds (in 2013, 66% of the people in the system were not white). The system is designed in a way that allows it to both control and exploit these communities. Confined to ghettoised areas with very limited possibilities to advance

up the social ladder (both because of a lack of educational opportunities and lack of jobs), they are trapped in what has been called 'the school to prison pipeline'. Their imprisonment allows the government to warehouse 'surplus' populations while at the same time pretending to care about social problems. Here, we need to also question what crime really is; for example, why do the bankers who wreck entire economies not get imprisoned while an 18-year-old caught with some weed does? It has been proven time and time again that imprisonment does not solve crime. Strong communities and low poverty do. To steer attention away from this fact is precisely the other, hidden, symbolic function of imprisonment: it serves to blame a certain part of the population, 'the underclass', 'these people', 'immigrants', for the insecurity felt in society. In this process minorities get targeted and used as scapegoats while the real culprits get a free pass (and, in this Monopoly, they collect much more than £200). Indeed, all over the Western world, as the economy has worsened, prison rates have risen even though crime rates have dropped. We have become used to immediately associating prison with the poor- why is that?

While minorities are warehoused in the millions (the USA has the largest prison population in the world), private companies make huge profits. Private prisons in the US have contracts with the government which

guarantee them their profits- for example, some prisons are promised at least an 80% capacity on the beds they provide. It doesn't matter if crime is low- these places need to be filled. What's more, prisoners are 'employed' in horrible conditions, with very little pay to make everyday items by big multinational companies such as McDonalds, Starbucks, Victoria's Secret, Wal-Mart (owner of ASDA), and the list goes on. One's first reaction would probably be to admit that this is bad, but 'at least they are given jobs'. This, however, would be wrong; the vast majority of those incarcerated are not dangerous, violent criminals, but working-class members of minorities that are caught in the system and are made to work, for much less pay with absolutely no rights, in the jobs that they don't have access to on the outside. This modern-day slavery must stop, but the thirteenth amendment in the constitution of the United States still explicitly allows slavery if it is as a punishment for a crime. Since the 9th of September 2016, more than 20,000 prisoners have participated in the IWOC strike in about 30 prisons all over the United States. Supporting their efforts is crucial for building a movement against the system that imprisons workers simply because they are poor, and then uses them to make even larger profits. More actions will be planned in the future.

### For more information visit:

[www.iwoc.noblogs.org/](http://www.iwoc.noblogs.org/)

[www.incarceratedworkers.noflag.org.uk/about-us/](http://www.incarceratedworkers.noflag.org.uk/about-us/)

## Agency Work and Immigrant Labour: A Struggle Yet to be Had

By a fellow worker

Today's Europe is characterized by destructive austerity policies and aggressive movements towards an intense liberalization of labour. In this neoliberal setting the role of employment agencies is to facilitate the provision of badly paid, insecure, temporary workers and to thereby lower the general conditions of labour. Immigrants, unable to find other means of work due to the structural racism present in the system, are frequently forced to seek agency work.

Of course, agencies are more than happy to exploit the uncertainty and insecurity of immigrants in order to maximize their profits. As a Greek immigrant living in Bradford before coming to Glasgow, I have spent the majority of my working life employed in various agencies and have experienced first-hand the exploitative, alienating and precarious nature of such conditions. The agency worker does not have a life; the schedules and locations constantly change and, since the nature of the work is to outperform your peers in order to secure more jobs, there is a constant dog-eat-dog mentality among the workforce which

destroys the traditional institution of solidarity. Refusing a job is equivalent to losing all future ones. The dehumanizing character of agency work is worsened by the fact that the agencies do their very best to cut corners and make savings from everything, culminating in deaths, such as that of a 16 year-old worker who was killed in an industrial 'accident' because his agency (Lime People) wanted to rush through his apprenticeship (Manchester Evening News, 6 July 2015).



If your employer is anything like this guy, join the IWW and start fighting back.

This February, when I left their books, the agency that employed me (Momentum) tried to withhold around £100 from my accrued holiday pay. When I challenged them they replied by providing me with some very complicated calculations which made absolutely no sense, making it evident that they were trying to exploit my perceived inability to

defend myself because of my immigrant status. When they were further challenged they resorted to promising me that everything was correct; finally, they started being outright sarcastic and laughing at me through the phone. I contacted the IWW and a case worker immediately responded. Together we sent the agency a letter explaining our point of view and demanding the money owed. As soon as they received the letter, they paid me within a week.

The above story is testament to the extent to which an agency will deceive and attempt to exploit the immigrant. It is also testament to the effectiveness of radical union action which does not try to 'compromise' with employers but actively defends the members' interests. That said, a tremendous number of immigrant workers remain outside of unions and subject to the worst combination of racism and class war. History has consistently shown that what happens to 'others'/ non-nationals is a sign of things to come for the locals. Especially in the light of the recent attempts by the Tories to use agency workers to break strikes, the rise of Trump and the far right (fascism, in its true form, is nothing more than the complete fusion/combination of big business with the state) and a persistent anti-immigrant rhetoric in the mainstream while austerity deepens, the need for the local Scottish/British workers to organise and coordinate with immigrant workers is as important as ever.